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From: Zaragoza, Larry
Sent: Mon 8/24/2015 12:13:58 PM
Subject: Gold King Articles

Articles of potential interest on Gold King Mine. See the last article. It talks about the blowout and how conditions were worse than expected.

Larry

Inside EPA <http://insideepa.com/node/184175>

BNM on Congressional Hearings:

http://esweb.bna.com/eslw/1245/split_display.adp?fedfid=74602426&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0h1u5r5n2&

Greenwire on the many mines and Good Samaritan Laws:

<http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2015/08/21/stories/1060023754>

Denver post: Sunday below (http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_28690510/epa-animas-river-surface-water-returning-pre-spill)

EPA: Animas River surface water returning to pre-spill conditions

The EPA said water samples collected last week indicate that the Animas River surface water is returning to pre-spill conditions

By Elizabeth Hernandez

The Denver Post

Posted: 08/23/2015 06:59:40 PM MDT [2 Comments](#) | Updated: about 8 hours ago



The Animas River as it appeared on Aug. 6. (*Denver Post file*)

- **Aug 22:**

- [Gold King Mine: EPA was told of blowout danger in June 2014](#)

- **Aug 21:**

- [Plan for clean-up of Gold King Mine area stymied for years](#)

- **Aug 20:**

- [EPA: San Juan River quality in Navajo country is at pre-Colorado spill levels](#)

- **Aug 19:**

- [Colorado, Utah attorneys general: Feds are withholding Gold King facts](#)

- **Aug 18:**

- [EPA inspector general to review Colorado mine disaster](#)

- [Animas River: Long-term impacts of wastewater spill lie beneath the current](#)

Environmental Protection Agency officials released new data Sunday that they said indicates surface water concentrations from the Animas River are returning to their normal conditions.

Water samples collected by the EPA on Aug. 16 and 17 have been validated, the agency said. An agency review of the data included a comparison to screening levels for exposure during recreational river use to see if the metal concentrations in the water are consistent with levels prior to the disastrous 3 million-gallon spill that inundated the river in early August.

"Based on the results of the surface water samples in the Animas River, surface water

concentrations are trending toward pre-event conditions," the EPA said Sunday.

Residents affected by the incident remain wary of the EPA in the wake of the spill. [Silverton](#) and the [Navajo Nation](#) have expressed concern with the agency.

[Experts point out](#) that metals lining the riverbed could continue to cause long-term effects for agriculture, aquatic life and other life-forms along the Animas River.

Documents released by the EPA late Friday showed that [the agency knew the Gold King mine was at risk](#) for blowout more than a year before wastewater spilled from the mine above Silverton on Aug. 5.

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[EPA: Animas River surface water returning to pre-spill conditions](#)

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Animas River surface water returning to pre-spill conditions

Another Denver Post article updated yesterday--http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_28685398/gold-king-mine-epa-was-told-danger-blowout?source=pkg

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Denver and the West

Gold King Mine: EPA was told of blowout danger in June 2014

EPA task order called Gold King Mine a time-critical site in June 2014

By Jesse Paul
The Denver Post

Posted: 08/22/2015 09:51:28 AM MDT [38 Comments](#) | Updated: a day ago



Polluted water flows down the Animas River Friday morning, August 7, 2015. (Brent Lewis, *The Denver Post*)

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ **Aug 23:**

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ EPA: Animas River surface water returning to pre-spill conditions

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ **Aug 21:**

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Plan for clean-up of Gold King Mine area stymied for years

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ **Aug 20:**

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ EPA: San Juan River quality in Navajo country is at pre-Colorado spill levels

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ **Aug 19:**

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ [Colorado, Utah attorneys general: Feds are withholding Gold King facts](#)

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ **Aug 18:**

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ [EPA inspector general to review Colorado mine disaster](#)

- ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ [Animas River: Long-term impacts of wastewater spill lie beneath the current](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency says there may still be blockages in the Gold King Mine that could lead to future wastewater surges more than two weeks after 3 million gallons of contaminants were released at the site.

Officials say while the EPA and state responders have "begun efforts" to ensure such plugs do not exist, the work has not been completed.

The news came as 92 pages of internal documents were released by the EPA late Friday showing the agency knew the Gold King was at risk for blowout more than a year before wastewater spilled [from the mine](#) above Silverton on Aug. 5.



Pete McKay, San Juan County commissioner in Colorado, looks at the site Monday, Aug. 10, 2015, where the Gold King Mine breach occurred, north of Silverton. (Jon Austria, *The Daily Times* via *The Associated Press*)

The papers say workers at the site had a list of precautions they were supposed to take to prevent such a disaster. It was unclear Saturday from the documents whether those steps were taken.

"Conditions may exist that could result in a blow-out of the blockages and cause a release of large volumes of contaminated mine waters and sediment from inside the mine, which contain concentrated heavy metals," an EPA task order from June 2014 said.

Media outlets and political figures alike [have been pushing for weeks](#) to see the documents released on Friday. The agency has come under intense criticism, much of it from politicians throughout the Southwest, [for a lack of transparency](#) in the Gold King disaster's wake.

The wastewater release sent yellow-orange sludge cascading into a tributary of the Animas River and prompted emergencies in three states and [two American Indian tribes](#).

The task order, sent to contractor Environmental Restoration LLC, called the mine a "time critical" site and said water could be backed up in the Gold King because of the partial collapse of its portal and blockages within its workings.

The documents show the Gold King's workings had no maintenance since 1991 and that its tunnels had been inaccessible since 1995, when its portal collapsed.

In an action plan dated in May, the EPA contractor slated to work on the mine — Environmental Restoration — said it planned to "de-water" the mine and remove blockages to prevent any blowout danger.

According to the plan, work was to be completed in the summer and fall of 2015, with an official start date of Aug. 17. The EPA said Saturday "work began at the site based on the availability of personnel and equipment, and appropriate weather conditions."

"Collapse blockage material removal will be performed in a controlled manner in (order) to control the rate of release of water and allow for appropriate treatment and sludge management," the EPA work order said.

The documents show the work crew was supposed to remove loose rock from the Gold King's portal bit-by-bit while simultaneously pumping out backed-up wastewater inside the mine. The waste was then to be directed to the adjacent Red and Bonita Mine, lower in elevation, where the EPA and contractors already had set up treatment areas to prevent contaminants from entering the watershed.

The work plan also indicates the crew was to set up structures at the Gold King portal to prevent a blowout, including bedding material and a culvert section. Also as a precaution, the task order instructed the crew to install a gate at the portal that could be locked as part of blowout prevention.

However, EPA supervisor Hays Griswold, who was at the scene of the blowout Aug. 5, told The Denver Post in an interview this month the plan in place "couldn't have worked." He said conditions in the mine were worse than anticipated.

"Nobody expected (the acid water backed up in the mine) to be that high," he said.

Griswold and his crew were using a backhoe to investigate the area near the Gold King's portal when the blowout happened.

"All that was holding it back was the dirt. The dirt just wasn't going to hold," Griswold said.

The EPA redacted cost estimates for the work from Environmental Restoration's contracts released Friday, covering up figures with a black mark. The agency says the costs were redacted because it is "confidential business information."

Environmental Restoration, in a statement posted on its website Aug. 13, said it stands "behind our project management team and labor force" at the Gold King. The company said because of "contractual confidentiality obligations," it cannot comment on their work at the site or the disaster.

Colorado Attorney General Cynthia Coffman said she read through the documents preliminarily Saturday morning, calling them a "start" that "lays out what should have happened" with work at the Gold King. Now, she says, the question is if the plans were followed.

"It puts a finer point on the fact that we need information about what happened on the fifth and the events leading up to (the spill)," she said. "When we see the EPA was aware of potential danger ... the next question is with that awareness did they take appropriate caution."

Coffman — who said her deputies are reviewing the documents — and her counterparts from New Mexico and Utah have said they are weighing a lawsuit against the EPA. The Navajo Nation says it plans to sue.

The Post visited the Gold King Mine on Wednesday, when wastewater was still flowing from its portal at about 600 gallons per minute. The EPA is treating the sludge below the mine through a series of sediment ponds and says it plans to construct a commercial water treatment apparatus before winter.

The Associated Press reported the agency had spent \$3.7 million through Thursday on response efforts in the spill's aftermath.

The EPA's inspector general, the agency's internal watchdog, is investigating the disaster, and the Department of the Interior is conducting an independent review expected to be completed in October.

U.S. Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, who chairs the House Science Space and Technology Committee, in a news release Friday announced a committee request for EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy to testify at a Sept. 9 hearing about the disaster.

"As the agency entrusted by the American people to protect the environment and ensure the nation's waters are clean, the EPA should be held to the highest standard," Smith said in the release. "The Science Committee needs to hear from the EPA about steps it is taking to repair the damage and to prevent this from ever occurring again."

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Gold king mine

The Gold King was in and out of operation between 1887 and 1922, during which is shipped 711,144 tons of gold and silver ore, according to the EPA. It is currently held by the Golden-based San Juan Corp. and had a permit for operation until 2005.

Before and after photos

Click a photo location to see before-and-after satellite imagery of the Animas River. Drag the slider from the center of the image to transition between before and after.

